Annual implementing report on the EU association agreement with Moldova

2019/2201(INI) - 28/09/2020 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Drago TUDORACHE (Renew Europe, RO) on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with the Republic of Moldova.

The report stressed that Moldova remains an unpredictable state. Its citizens look to the European Union, but its political class is unable to provide political stability and reliable leadership.

EU's commitment

Since the establishment of the Eastern Partnership and until the end of 2018, Moldova has received from Brussels more than EUR 1 billion in jointly agreed projects.

Members reaffirmed the Union's commitment to support Moldova's European path through political association, economic integration and the respective reforms. The Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA/DCFTA) remains of primary importance for the development Moldova, especially in current exceptional times. However, further progress must be achieved in its implementation, to deliver its full potential and benefits, particularly by focusing on the independence of State institutions, their resilience against the influence from oligarchs, fight against corruption, justice, the strengthening rule of law and on improving the living conditions of the citizens.

Fair elections

Members called on the Moldovan authorities to ensure free and fair presidential elections scheduled on 1 November 2020. The authorities should also:

- refrain from altering rules and regulations for political gain, which will always end in political unrest and instability affecting the commitment for structural reforms;

- strengthen democratic mechanisms, including a multi-party parliamentary system, and to ensure free, independent and pluralistic media;

- strengthen resilience against disinformation and information manipulation by domestic and foreign actors, online and offline;

Reforms and institutional framework

While welcoming the reforms that led to the introduction of a visa-free regime with the Union, Members are concerned about the rise of the number of Moldovan nationals found to be illegally staying in the Schengen+ area (47% rise) and about the rise in asylum applications (48% rise). They urged Moldovan authorities to further implement the commitments made in the context of the liberalised visa regime for the Schengen area in the area of effective migration management and to ensure asylum rights for third-country applicants in the Republic of Moldova.

Rule of law and good governance

Concerned by the low level of trust in the integrity and effectiveness of the judiciary and by the susceptibility of the judicial branch to political pressure which hampers its independence, Members called on the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to ensure transparency in the judicial appointment processes. They urged the Moldovan authorities to strengthen the complete independence of the Constitutional Court and to ensure that it is not subject to any form of political interference.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms

The committee acknowledged the improvement of the legislation on the protection of human rights, notably as a result of the new 2018-2022 Human Rights Action Plan. It called on the Moldovan authorities to significantly increase efforts in this area. They expressed deep concern at the situation of Moldovans stranded in EU Member States due to the COVID-19 crisis without social protection.

Institutional provisions

Lastly, the EU institutions and the Member States are, in close cooperation with the authorities of the Republic of Moldova, urged to better communicate the benefits of the AA/DCFTA and the EU assistance to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova.